

Media and Audio Practices: a Search for Philosophical Background of Analysis

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Abstract. Analysis of sound-based media artistic practices will serve as a case of a new media paradigm of contemporary art. This aim is informed by transintermedia, the multimodal nature of these practices that synthesize audio, visual, and proprioceptive forms of artistic communication in today's media environment, as well as by the integrative nature of the multimedia interactive catalogue/archive that allows one to present on a platform individual projects, their documentation, analysis, geography, authorship, and reception, as well as philosophical reflection by the researchers. Catalogization, systematic description and philosophical analysis of sound-based media artistic practices will allow for the effective support and promotion of media-art and sound-art practices in the framework of new programs and projects, plans for the development of urban and regional artistic and acoustic social and cultural environments.

Keywords: media-art, sound-art, technology

1. Introduction

The problem statement is justified by the fact that media and audio practices are an important element of modern world culture. In the first half of the 20th century they were formed as an art experiment, today they combine musicians, artists, programmers and those who perceive, try to express and understand specifics of our time using new technological facilities. Media and audio installations and performances appear in galleries and exhibitions of modern art, and come into modern urban space. Active development is seen in Europe, Russia, Latin America and other parts of the world.

Our aim is to specify the methodological and theoretical background of systematization of such projects, that is important for their support and

promotion within the framework of formation of programs and projects, development plans for a city and regional art and acoustic sociocultural environment based on existing methods of description of such practices in Russia, Europe and Latin America.

2. Overview

Due to a long activity of the Studio of electro-acoustical music Termen-Center and other initiatives, a new generation of artists and musicians was formed in Russia over the last 20 years, that work in various genres and formats and create their own institutional research platforms (community SoundArtist.ru, Moscow Gallery of Sound Art SA))_gallery, Computer New Music Researchers Group (CNMRG) and media lab Cyland in St. Petersburg, department of a sound by Oleg Makarov in the Rodchenko School, festival Sound Around in Kaliningrad, etc.)

New scientific groups are being actively organized in Europe, whose research and practices are devoted to the issue of a sound and music in the city environment. For example, in 2018 a network of practical experts and researchers of a sound in the city environment Urban Music Scholarly Network (<http://www.urbanmusicstudies.org/>), initiated by scientists of the University of Leufania (Germany) with the purpose of identifying frames and development direction for this field of knowledge, was established. One of the leading working directions of this group is sociology of a sound within the framework of sociology of art and inclusion of a sound and music to the field of the study of the city environment cultural industry. Among similar European projects we should note Sound Diplomacy (<https://www.sounddiplomacy.com/>), Sound Studies Lab (<http://www.soundstudieslab.org>) and Sound & Science Histories (<https://acoustics.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/about>).

Practices of sound-art, city noise and media noises are widely studied in Latin America. Existing works are quite geographically diverse and cover Latin America as well as the Global South. Issues of the Journal of Sonic Studies are regularly devoted to the problem of sound-art, for example a special issue Soundscapes of Latin America. A number of publications and a variety of topics in this journal highlights the actuality of the problem for Latin American researchers. Research of city sounds and Research of city acoustic environment are specific focuses of the work of Latin American scientists.

The issue of sound landscape is popular among scientists, such as Matos Wunderlich [Wunderlich] or Lefebvre [Lefebvre], as well as among bloggers

(http://en.soundaround.me/about_soundtrips_en/), that, for example, focus on city development issues. Such scientists and bloggers develop new original methods for analysis of city space, including sounded walking and recording city noises, their catalogization and mapping [Altunas Nott, 2019; Pyne Feinberg, 2016]. See also Turner's projects on <https://soundwalkinginteractions.wordpress.com/2019/03/16/camille-turners-sonic-walks/>.

As a rule, development and use of such methods are inspired by a theory of rhythm-analysis by Lefebvre [1992] and preceding practices of using art tools of activism and reinterpretation of city space. A good example of a combination of research and innovatory methodological poetry is a work of Michael Takeo Magruder "Imaginary cities" where the artist combines various media and archive materials for the creation of imaginary cities and their soundings (<http://www.takeo.org>). We face similar complex examples of sound study — use — catalogization when we go deep into the spaces of the museum-theater NN in Lublin, where organizers use city noise in order to increase sensitivity to the exhibition theme (<http://teatrnn.pl>). Another visual example is a music architecture project by David and Peter Adjaye (<https://soundcloud.com/musicforarchitecture>), including sound/sonic graffiti and sound architecture that promote the development of tourism and urbanism [Canevacci & Forero, 2008; Castro Carvajal, 2014; Cuervo Pulido, 2015; Queiroz Filho, 2016; Avilés Arias, 2016; Llorca, 2017; Canevacci, 2017; Soto Narváez, 2017; Jaramillo Arango, 2018; Sandra, Quintero & López, 2018].

An important line in the study of a sound is the study of pedagogical, gnoseological, epistemic and therapeutic potential of a sound [Gershon & Ben-Horin, 2014; Gershon, 2017; Rybicki-Newman, 2019; Clemens & Ravaglioli, 2019], an important element for a reinterpretation of a constructed environment, city, relations between a city and nature, and social relations.

Regarding this, it is necessary to note a contribution of a group of scientists exploring the qualitative methodology of education and social research [Gershon, 2013; Gershon & Appelbaum, 2016; Golovátina-Mora, 2018, 2019; Flint, 2019; Daza & Gershon, 2015], where issue of a sound is mentioned in many works in parallel with the issue of the manner to hear and be heard [Dee Smith, 2019; Shannon, 2019], dependence of educational efficiency from a teacher's voice intonations and sounds of the environment, and student skills to hear and to understand. In a broad sense, these studies study the ecology of a hearing experience and/ or ecology of audio and acoustic environment perception [Deleuze & Guattari, 2005; Massumi & Manning, 2014].

A number of conferences and festivals devoted to the theme of a sound in a city environment has also increased in all the continents (e.g. International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry; Conferences of European Sociological Association — RN- Sociology of Art; Groove the City; Festival Internacional de la Imagen — Paisajes y Puentes Sonoros; Affects, Interfaces, Events Conference).

But narratives that systematically describe these practices, their history and geography, are not available. The phenomenon of media and audio practices in world science remains theoretically not understood in its integrity and variety as it has fallen out from the field of interest of modern music study and art study and does not fall into the field of research of information technologies and media communications. Today, practices of sound-art accumulate esthetic attitude to reality and technological achievements in the field of media and start new art and communicative media and audio effects: for example sound walkings make it possible to feel city space and the environment in general in a new form, interactive audio installations make it possible to feel your audio reaction to the action and use of machine learning techniques and neuronets immerse one in the field of the unpredictable. One of the important specifics of sound perception is influence on the affective (precognition) level due to how a sound may be a strong motivating factor which, in its turn, defines its meaning in the space of social and cultural communication.

Despite the fact that interest in the phenomenon of a sound strengthened with the start of sound recording, studying sound as an art concept commenced only in the second half of the 20th century with the development of new music and border-line practices in art. The theoretical and methodological strengthening of researchers' interest happened by the 1990s, and since that time the esthetic research field of the phenomenon of a sound is a formed field of knowledge that differs by interdisciplinarity. In general, we may define the following conditional blocks of disciplines, which are closely related to each other.

The widest category is sound studies. A variety of approaches in this field is shown — especially in literature in English — by key anthologies [Sterne, 2012]. Sound studies may include understanding the phenomenon of a sound from the point of view of philosophy (ontology and phenomenology) [Cox, 2018], cultural being (including political potential of a sound) [LaBelle, 2018], media theory (analysis of the role of audio carriers as well as of a sound as a me-

dium) [Sterne, 2012], as well as the anthropology of “acoustical” consumption (the role of hearing in identity formation, for example, the appearance of “distributed subjectivity”) [Kassabian, 2013]. This category may also include papers devoted to ecoacoustics, i. e. analysis of a sound landscape (a term by a Canadian composer, music expert and teacher Raymond Murray Schafer, presented in the book *Ear Cleaning. Notes for an Experimental Music Course* in 1967 and covering the complete variety of site sound characteristics that shall be studied by the methods from language structural analysis to psycho-acoustics and ontology). Ecoacoustics includes practices of field recoding (rooted in techniques of “deep listening” and “sound walkings” offered by a Canadian painter and composer Hildegard Westerkamp in the end of the 1970’s) as well as studies of city environment ecology.

The esthetic research field of a sound phenomenon and its inclusion into art is still not stable: terminological instability, diffused research borders, announcing stable concepts instead of analysis are often met in a few works of contemporary authors. Along with that, the European Sound Studies Association exists. One of the conferences held in 2014 was named “Mapping a field” where a need for the meaningful description of existing variety of media and audio projects was identified. On the foreign scene this started with Chrestomathy and Guide on sound research issued by Routledge publishing house and the publishing house of Oxford University. [The Sound Studies Reader by Sterne, 2012; The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies, eds. Pinch and Bijsterveld, 2012]. Here studies of a sound are positioned as an inter-disciplinary field of study. We may note that the ratio between music and non-music where the ideas of the music avant-garde of the recent 100 years has become meaningful material and become one of the key topics.

Another block of works is somehow related to the music study and the problem of the ratio between music and non-music, where ideas of the music avant-garde of the recent 100 years becoming a meaningful material, has become one of the key topics. Problematization of borders of the esthetic and music took place in the first half of the 20th century when composers started to introduce various noises and other “non-music” sounds into music pieces. The notion of music itself was brought into doubt in works and music pieces of some composers of the last century. In 1937 John Cage in the work “Future of music: credo” suggested replacing the term “music” by a phrase “organized sound” — contrary to a “non-organized” sound. We may find ideas of a sound phenomenal ontology in his works, when the whole

world is understood as a multi-voice sounding phenomenon. In this case a sound, as well as noise, or silence, may be interpreted via an existential and phenomenological framework [Motte-Haber, 1999]. Schafer in the book *Ear Cleaning. Notes for an Experimental Music Course*, 1967, developed this idea, suggesting a new concept — “Soundscape” (audio landscape). This concept covers a complete variety of site audio characteristics that may be studied by various methods. The audio landscape is the main subject of sound ecology and is being actively developed today by urban specialists within the framework of city environment ecology studies. It includes a complex of soundings that shall, on the one hand, be thoroughly stored, and, on the other hand, creatively manipulated. In Russia Svetlana Lavrova [2017], Andrey Logutov [2017] and Vadim Keilin [2017] have developed these issues.

Works on electro acoustic music (acousmatic, spectrum music, computer music, etc.) form a subdivision of this block. These are mainly applicable research studies created by the authors of music as well as instruments for its performance (synthesizers and software). The leading Western periodicals devoted to this issue are the journals *Organized Sound* (An International Journal of Music and Technology), Cambridge University Press и *Leonardo Music Journal*, The MIT Press. A long tradition of electro acoustics is available in Russia. In particular, the work of Andrey Smirnov, a founder of Studio of electro acoustical music Termen-Center by the Moscow School of Music, is devoted to the study of it [Smirnov, 2013]. Practices of the last 20 years are illustrated, for example, in a journal “Electronic music”. A few publications related to actual practices are of specialized and auxiliary or too descriptive and non-theoretical nature.

Finally, a next block is publications devoted to spatial and audio art practices existing in the field of modern art and formats of audio installations and performance, i.e. sound-art in its existing polyphonic understanding. Among a lot of works in this area, that are mainly art-study, we would like to highlight a 744-page compendium *Sound Art as a Medium of Art* [Weibel, 2019] that comprises articles of key representatives of sound-art researchers, a two-volume anthology of sound-art studies *The Oxford Handbook of Sound & Imagination* [Grimshaw-Aagaard, 2019], as well as a classic monograph by Brandon LaBelle, where key esthetic characteristics of sound-art are described through the concept of the history of its various styles [LaBelle, 2015]. Among works devoted to specific aspects of media and audio art we should mention, as examples, publications devoted to mobile sound [Behrendt,

2012], sound as an element of nature [Kahn, 2009, 2013], as well as another study, sound-poetry [Bulatov, 2001].

As the notion of media and audio practices is neither stable nor formed as a concept in Russian and foreign esthetic theory, we may speak about similar notions that are being studied during the recent 20–30 years. This mainly entails the notion of sound-art.

Some studies are carried out within the framework of a traditional morphological approach to art where sound-art is a part of modern processes existing in music, for example, in the work of Polyakiva “Synthesis of arts in modern sound-art” [2018]. The author gives a formally stylistic analysis of audio installations based on the concept of the synthesis of arts developed by Kandinsky.

Other research divides the notion of music and audio art [Kabrin'skaya “Sound-art and border between music and audio art”, 2018] or combines them and then sound-art appears as “new music” [Lavrova “Neoconceptualism in new music of XXI century: idea as a good, idiom as a trade mark”, 2017]. Some research considers sound-art via an enlarged notion of new media art [for example, Lavrova “New music of XXI century in the context of New Media Art” 2017; Medvedeva, 2014] or acoustic media [Keilin, “Audial sculpture in a public space: Speaker Sculptures of Benua Mobri”, 2017], where they consider also specific, already implemented, art strategies of combining private and public spaces using technologies and acoustic media. Maiorova in the work “Urban Sound Studies: new horizons of city research” [2017] describes the history of the sound-studies establishment focusing on the “launch of art projects into an urban environment. Rotenberg performed a step-by-step mapping of city audio space and perception of sounding art objects in modern city space in 2017–2018 in Jerusalem. In the article “Music of public spaces: sounding art objects in urban design” [2018] the author concludes that the described audio installations change the nature of interaction with an urban environment as well as inside city communities.

Some articles introduce the notion of sound-art as a part of media installations where the organization of sound and audio space in general are very important: “Sounding substance: the practice of spatial and audio sculpture of Bill Fountain and development of principles of immersivity in sound-projects” (2018). Sound acts as the main media enabling finding new capabilities of an installation that acts as “audio installation” [Khrust, 2018; Orlova, 2019].

The meta-esthetic level, where the influence of technologies on modern art is studied, is presented by the research of Bychkov and Mankovskaya

[Bychkov, Mankovskaya, 2011a; 2011b], and also in the works of Medvedeva [Medvedeva, 2014], Gerasimov and Zibrova [Gerasimov and Zibrova, 2015]. Phenomenon of a sound is represented in Lukianova's studies [Lukianova, 2015], ontological turn — in Brian Kane's books [Kane, 2017], interactive media — in Denikin's articles [Denikin, 2017, 2019].

3. Conclusion

Despite the listed works, there is still a need for a deeper and complex analysis of existing media and audio practices. Today scientists need to compensate this gap and develop ways of empirical description of practices and projects by the way of studying criteria necessary to issue of a digital catalog and generate a theoretical background for conceptualization of media and a technological paradigm of modern art.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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